

February 1, 2006

Volume 5, Issue 8

Volunteer Voice

Voice of the State *by Deborah Merrill*

Dear Volunteers,

OK., it's about the article in the January *Volunteer Voice*. What was I thinking writing an article about "Change". There has been a whirlwind of change in Topeka in the last month.

On Tuesday, January 3rd, Governor Kathleen Sebelius appointed Kathy Greenlee, Acting Secretary on Aging. That same day, I was appointed Acting State LTC Ombudsman.

I just want to take a minute and let you know how this impacts all of us. We have had several State Ombudsman in the past few years. I hope that this change is the most fluid transition that we can manage. I have a few ideas for future projects that are of particular interest. Later articles will address these.

Current priority has to be on legislative issues and state office stability. The Silver-Haired Legislature bill asking for three additional regional ombudsman was carried over from last year. AARP is sponsoring a bill to raise the Personal Needs Allowance for Medicaid residents. I will track these and others that impact long-term care residents. With ongoing projects and volunteer training, I expect to keep busy.

I have always considered the Volunteer program to be at the heart of our advocacy. You form the closest relationships with residents, their families and facility staff. Those of you who have been volunteers for awhile may have heard me try to get through a volunteer conference without tears. This program is in my heart. I feel that frail, elderly, and disabled Kansans living in nursing facilities have a louder voice because of this program.

I will continue to support and grow the volunteer corp while I am Acting State Ombudsman. Thank you for all you do.

Deb

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Medicare Prescription Drug Help!

As part of the Governor's allocation of funds to assist Medicare beneficiaries with prescription drug decisions, our office has hired two temporary outreach specialist, Gary and Mary Adkins. Gary and Mary have training and experience assisting seniors with enrollment. As of February 1st, they are available to visit facilities, make presentations, and provide one-on-one counseling to residents and their families. These education specialists will have access to the Medicare Plan finder and can assist residents on-site in determining the top few

plans that fit their needs. We will not be choosing a plan for residents but providing information that will allow them to make informed decisions. With the deadline of May 15th a few months away, this will be a wonderful opportunity for residents to get more information. We will contact you if a meeting is planned in your facility. You may wish to participate.

Encourage your facilities to call our office for an appointment. If immediate problems occur with dual eligible residents, please refer these to your Regional Ombudsman.



*Happy
President's
Day!*

“Squeaky Wheel” by Cynthia Bailey

Before I get into detail, I received this from one of my volunteers. You can't read this and stay in a bad or unhappy mood!

1. How do you catch a unique rabbit? Unique up on it.
2. How do you catch a tame rabbit? Tame way, unique up on it
3. How do crazy people go through the forest? They take the psycho path.
4. How do you get holy water? You boil the hell out of it.
5. What do fish say when they hit a concrete wall? Dam!
6. What do you call a boomerang that doesn't work? A stick
7. Why did pilgrims' pants always fall down? Because they wore their belt buckle on their hat.
8. What lies at the bottom of the ocean and twitches? A nervous wreck.

Now, admit it. At least one of these made you smile??

Well, things have been on the go here for our staff and also you volunteers since the first of the year. As you all know, we now have a new State Ombudsman, Deborah Merrill. Since I started a year and a half ago, Deborah has worn, many hats, this is the newest one. We have become more involved with the new Medicare D changes, and this is only the second month of the new year.

Lately a few of my volunteers and I have had more frequent calls concerning disputes between residents and staff, and on the flip side, family members and staff. Disagreements with a nursing home can come up regarding any number of topics. None are trivial because they involve the day-to-day life of the resident. Disputes can arise about the quality of food, the level of assistance that the resident feels that there is a lack of, disputes about a roommate, or disrespect from staff and family members. A resident and family

member may be afraid of retaliation. That risk may be small, but nevertheless is a concern for them if they complain. Sometimes persistence is what is needed. You're familiar with the saying "the squeaky wheel gets the grease". Well, BE A Squeaky Wheel!

There are nursing homes that live up to the ideal of what residents need and want. Sometimes the ideal is not what is happening. The question for us is what is possible and how can we advocate for residents effectively. This can be a hard determination to make and in some cases we not only advocate for residents, but also become mediators.

Following is a list of the interventions we can take or encourage a resident and/or family member to take.

- Talk to staff. Let them know what you expect, what you care about and what the resident and family members concerns are. This may easily solve the problem. You are there for the well being of the resident.
- Talk to a supervisor, such as the administrator, DON, or social service coordinator. Explain the problem or concern as you see it with the expectation that the issue will be favorably resolved, and it may well be.
- Perhaps you may need to hold a meeting with the appropriate nursing home personnel. This can be a scheduled meeting or you can ask for a special meeting to resolve a problem that wasn't resolved informally.
- Being an advocate for the resident is important because you are not as emotionally involved as a family member would be. You are one who understands how nursing homes function as institutions. This can help you determine what is possible to accomplish and can encourage the facility to make the necessary changes to resolve issues.

As Ombudsmen, we are there to be an advocate for the resident. A resident expects to be treated with dignity and respect at all times. This is their home and one should feel as good and comfortable as they can in their home. ♦

Dates to Remember

**Kansas Long-Term Care
Ombudsman**

Volunteer Conference

Thursday and Friday

May 18th & 19th, 2006

at

Marriott Hotel

Wichita, Kansas

Volunteer Ombudsman

Training

During the coming year, we are embarking on an extensive training schedule. Our goal is to expand existing volunteer units and develop new units across Kansas.

We will begin training in Garden City the 8th of February. If all goes as planned, March will find us in Pittsburg and April we will be in Hays. We are hoping for a good number of trainees in each area.

AARP is assisting with recruitment in all areas by sending a mailing to their membership. If you, as experienced volunteers, have someone you know who would be interested; please give them the 1-877-662-8362 number. We would be happy to talk to them and send information regarding training in their area.

It is our hope that with further training Kansans in long-term care facilities will have better access to ombudsman who can visit them and advocate on their behalf. ♦

*Happy
Valentine's
Day!*

Here's a Case!



Mrs. Murphy can not communicate with anyone at Shady Pines. Her family has a very strong and definite presence in her day to day care. So much so, that the daughter comes to the facility no less than five times a day. Family feels that no one can take good care of Mrs. Murphy but them. Her daughter is not medically trained, but she wants to be the one to clean or change her mother if she is soiled. Mrs. Murphy wants her daughter to be the only one to bathe and dress her. Her daughter feels that the only way the resident can sleep at night is to have her bed in an upright position, fearing if she lays down she can aspirate. The resident has developed a bed sore on her hip that is very deep. Her daughter brings zinc oxide ointment from home and puts it on her five times a day. She has a hand written notice on the wall that Mrs. Murphy is to sleep only with the bed in an upright position. Because of this position, the resident is constantly sitting on the

wound. All of this instruction is from the resident's private physician. The family feels that the facility medical director can not give the quality care that they feel the resident needs. The medical director called the ombudsman saying that he feels that the wound will never heal properly with the resident sitting on it as she sleeps. The ointment that the daughter applies does not heal wounds.

What can the Ombudsman do? After talking to staff, family and physicians, the ombudsman determined that everything was happening as described. The facility feels that each time the family doesn't agree with the medical director, they call their private physician and his office will send new orders to be followed by the family. This seems to be an issue of which doctor's orders the facility must follow in order to provide the best care to the resident.

The medical director called the ombudsman with his concern regarding the family interference. The personal

physician is willing to allow the family to provide care.

The ombudsman suggested that a Care Plan meeting be called so that issues can be addressed. Prior to the meeting, it was suggested that the medical director work out a treatment with the private physician that they could both agree on. The treatment should help heal the wound and provide good care for the resident. Since the daughter is not a medically trained professional, the ombudsman asked her to call an aide when the resident needed to be changed or lifted out of a bed or chair.

The resident's family needs to be educated on what can happen medically with their loved one's care. The confusion of which doctor's order to follow has to be resolved. The meeting is coming up. This case is not yet closed. It will be monitored by the ombudsman to see if the resident's needs are met. ♦♦♦

"Public Service" By Kathy Greenlee

I've done this for fifteen years.

I began working for the State of Kansas in April 1991. At that time, I decided I wanted to be an Assistant Attorney General for Bob Stephan. It didn't matter to me what I did, only that I worked in the Attorney General's office. I accepted the jobs that came my way, found a passion for consumer protection and lost my beloved job following an election.

I looked around and decided I wanted to work for newly elected Insurance Commissioner Kathleen Sebelius. I spent eight years at the insurance department. I accepted the three jobs that came my way, re-established my love for consumer protection and left the department the day after Kathleen was elected Governor.

Since that day in November 2002, I have been the Chief of Staff for the Governor, the Chief of Operations for the Governor, the Assistant Secretary for the Kansas Department on Aging, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and, now, the Acting Secretary of the Kansas Department on Aging.

This is what public service looks like for me.

Advocacy is my passion. I bring my heart, my brain, my leadership and my sense of humor to each new job. I invest in people and programs and then, invariably, I move on. But, I never move at a time of my choosing.

I sincerely enjoyed my time as the state long-term care ombudsman. Those months went way too fast. It was fabulous to meet you all, build a team, hire new staff, recruit more volunteers and make terrific plans for the future. And then, the Governor called and asked me to serve in a new capacity once again.

I am a better Secretary of Aging for having spent time with you. My passion for advocacy is un-abetted. I will pour everything I have into this position. Yet, this kind of service exacts a price. The sacrifice I make is that I am constantly saying goodbye to good hearted and dedicated people like you. I will always hold the ombudsman program, staff and volunteers in the highest regard. As Secretary of Aging, I will continue to advocate for the rights of long term care residents.

Thank you for everything you do.

Kathy Greenlee

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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**OMBUDSMAN;
Reaching out for Quality Care**

Phone: 1-877-662-8362
Fax: 785-296-3916
Email: ltco@da.state.ks.us

We're on the web at:
[Http://da.state.ks.us/care](http://da.state.ks.us/care)

This Month's Events!

Kansas City Volunteer Meeting

Wednesday, February 8th, 2006
9:30am, Sunflower Room, SRS
Overland Park

Garden City Volunteer Meeting

Thursday, February 9th, 2006
9:00am, Garden City Senior Ctr

Wichita Volunteers Meeting

Monday, February 13th, 2006
6:00pm, Downtown Senior Ctr

Hutchinson Volunteer Meeting

Tuesday, February 14th, 2006
1:00pm, S. Hutch Christian Church

Newton Volunteer Meeting

Thursday, February 16th, 2006
1:00pm, First Missionary Church

Topeka Volunteer Meeting

Saturday, February 18th, 2006
10:00am, Topeka Public Library

Great Bend Volunteer Meeting

Tuesday, February 28th, 2006
4:30pm, at LaRae's

Salina Volunteer Meeting

Individual meetings in NH
scheduled by Sue

No Meetings

Individual meetings scheduled
by Regional

Emporia Volunteer s

Manhattan Volunteer s

Abilene Volunteers

Seneca/Sabetha Volunteer

Liberal Volunteer

